

# **Eligibility of Historically Underrepresented Students Referred for Gifted Education in a Rural School District: A Case Study**

Edwina Pendarvis  
Marshall University

Ellen Wallace Wood  
Prince Edward County Public Schools

*This case study describes a rural school district's efforts to identify historically underrepresented gifted students (HUGS) more effectively than in the past. The district developed new policy; disseminated the policy with lists of characteristics of HUGS; provided a workshop for first-grade teachers to encourage early referrals; and provided alternative tests to students who were referred for evaluation and who scored at least one standard deviation above the mean on an individually administered comprehensive intelligence test, but who did not score high enough to qualify for placement according to state regulations. Of the historically underrepresented children referred for testing, 29% qualified for placement in the gifted program. The county's efforts appeared to increase placement of HUGS; however, the new policy excluded some HUGS who would have been identified under the old policy. Consequently, the county made a decision to combine elements of the new and old policies.*

For years, educators have researched and discussed the efficacy of various approaches to identifying gifted students who come from groups that have consistently been underrepresented in gifted programs in the United States. Advocates for students from minority ethnic and racial groups, students who have disabilities, students for whom English is not a primary language, and students from poverty-stricken homes have sought identification procedures that are valid and reliable indicators of these students' ability or potential (e.g., Baldwin, 1984; Borland & Wright, 1994; Fox, Brody, & Tobin, 1983; Frazier,

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Edwina Pendarvis, Professor Emeritus, Marshall University, coordinated and taught in Marshall's gifted education graduate program. Ellen Wallace Wood earned an undergraduate degree from Emory and Henry College and a master's degree from Marshall University.

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1991). Critics of gifted education have, understandably, chided theorists, researchers, and practitioners for failing to make sufficient progress in this regard (Sapon-Shevin, 2003). Indeed, failure to provide equitable representation in gifted programs characterizes most gifted programs, even those in underfunded and rural school districts in which a large proportion of school students are economically disadvantaged. This study considers the efforts of one such school district to address this problem while maintaining its practice of identifying giftedness through two of the most criticized of identification methods: teacher referral and the use of standardized intelligence tests.

### **Rationale and Context for the Study**

In view of Bernal's (2003) statement of the need to evaluate efforts to include historically underrepresented gifted students (HUGS) in gifted programs, the authors of this study set out to analyze and describe the results of one district's effort to make a difference in representation of these students. The district's effort consisted of combining (1) a workshop to encourage first-grade teachers to refer students for evaluation, especially students who belonged to minority racial groups or who were economically disadvantaged, and (2) the implementation of new policy requiring alternative tests for students who belong to historically underrepresented groups and who do not score in the 98th percentile or higher on the full scale of a comprehensive, individually administered intelligence test.

#### *Historical Context of Study*

In spite of economic hardship, West Virginia has a strong commitment to gifted education. Underfunded as they are, the schools provide some advantages that are not available to students in all states. Since 1974, West Virginia has had a legislative mandate requiring districts to identify all intellectually gifted students in the state and to provide each one of them an appropriate education. Because of this mandate and the regulations governing its implementation, West Virginia's gifted programs provide services based on individualized education plans (IEPs) for students in every school district in the state. The gifted education

programs provide acceleration and enrichment to many students who, despite their exceptional academic promise, would not receive special services if they lived in other states. In West Virginia, teachers who have been specially trained and certified provide instruction or consultative services for gifted students.

Nevertheless, West Virginia's gifted programs are not ideal. Although acceleration must be considered as an alternative, it is not chosen as a means of individualization nearly as often as it should be. Gifted programs in West Virginia, as in many states, consist primarily of pull-out programs taught by teachers who have to travel among several different schools. Often, students' gifted education services amount to only an hour or so a week. Worse, some students fail to receive even that token differentiation because they are simply not recognized as gifted and referred for evaluation. Some students, especially HUGS, who are referred are given tests that may not adequately assess their academic potential. This last problem, the problem of a systematic bias implicit in the procedures employed to identify gifted students, was brought to the attention of the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in 1998.

According to the OCR, West Virginia showed inequities in special education programs in that children from racial minority groups were overrepresented in programs for students with learning or behavior problems and underrepresented in gifted programs. This situation indicated a need for more equitable identification processes for exceptional students, a need that has been recognized in many school districts (Morris, 2002).

The action by OCR resulted in the review of the statewide referral and evaluation policy for determining eligibility for gifted education. The basic eligibility criteria remained the same. They were (and are) as follows, under WVDE Policy 2419 (2003, p. 25):

Student attains a full-scale score of 2.0 or more standard deviations above the mean on a comprehensive test of intellectual ability with consideration of 1.0 standard error of measurement at 68% confidence interval.

*and*

Student requires specially designed instruction in one or more of the four core curriculum areas as indicated by performance on an individual standardized achievement test or by classroom performance as determined during the multi-disciplinary evaluation.

#### *Local Context of Study*

The original WVDE regulations also stated that students who were economically different or disadvantaged; whose native language was not English; or who were disabled could be eligible for services for gifted students on the basis of either a Verbal or Performance IQ of two or more standard deviations above the mean on a comprehensive test of intellectual ability with consideration of 1.0 standard error of measurement. The test used for this determination was the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III (WISC-III) because the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale IV (S-B IV), another IQ test commonly used to help determine eligibility at the time, did not provide Verbal and Performance IQ scores.

The OCR made no official objection to the provision for alternative criteria for HUGS, but the visiting representatives of that office made it clear that they would prefer a broader statement in the regulations, one that would not be regarded as a lowering of standards for placement. Consequently, the Verbal or Performance IQ alternative was taken out of the regulations through the usual process of regulation change, and a new regulation was established. The new state regulation was broader, allowing local school districts more autonomy in identifying HUGS. It read as follows:

If it is determined by the eligibility committee that the eligibility criteria and/or assessment instruments discriminate against a student because the student belongs to a population which is historically under-represented in gifted programs, further assessment will be requested and eligibility for gifted services shall be based upon criteria which complement the definition and eligibility for gifted. (WVDE, 2003, p. 25)

In its review of West Virginia's compliance with equal opportunity laws, OCR specifically identified five counties in West Virginia as underidentifying minority students in gifted education. Each of the five county school districts developed identification procedures that would help them to address the problem. Most of the districts chose to use a matrix approach to identification, but because of problems with the validity of this approach (Dirks & Quarforth, 1981), one district sought other approaches. Mountain County School District (a pseudonym) made some changes to its current policy, but, rather than adopt approaches its decision makers regarded as problematic, the district decided to collect data to inform the development of more extensive changes in identification procedures. In effect, the county adopted an interim policy. This policy made minimal changes to its current policy. The authors of this report analyzed the data to see how children from historically underrepresented groups fared under this new, interim policy that maintained conventional measures, but added two alternative measures as well as teacher training, as explained below.

## **Method**

### *Data Source*

The school psychologists in the district maintained a folder on each student who was referred and evaluated to determine eligibility. In addition to the demographics typically in students' evaluation records, such as gender, age, and grade, the folders included information on the students' race and economic status, as well as whether they were living with one parent or both parents. The scores obtained on comprehensive individually administered intelligence tests; scores on alternative tests, if any were administered; and achievement test scores were included in the records. Whether a student was identified as gifted by the eligibility committee and whether such determination was made on the basis of the original eligibility criteria or the alternative eligibility criteria were also recorded. The information

in these folders was analyzed to determine the rate of eligibility of HUGS under the new policy.

### *Participants*

The referred students all live in a mountainous, rural, and economically depressed area of the state. In Mountain County, the roads are curvy, narrow, and in need of repair. Travel is dangerous because of road conditions, especially in winter, and the many coal trucks on the roads. The county's population of almost 27,000 averages only 46 people per square mile. About 11% of the population is African American. A large proportion lives at or below the poverty level. The unemployment rate is about 10%. The median household income in 1999 was \$16,931, lower than the state average of \$29,696 and less than half the national average, which was about \$37,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Only about 6% of the adult population has a college degree.

The school district serves approximately 4,800 students in seven small elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools. The school board office is located in the vocational-technical center that serves some high school students and also houses the district's resource center for gifted elementary and middle school students. The center is located in the county seat, which is also the largest town in the county.

Because the district coordinator of gifted programs recognized the importance of early identification of gifted students, she identified a professor who taught in one of the West Virginia universities' gifted education endorsement programs to conduct a workshop for the district's first-grade teachers. The purpose of the workshop was to help them identify gifted students from groups who are historically underrepresented in gifted programs and to encourage them to refer these students for evaluation to determine their eligibility. Encouragement to refer included reassuring the teachers that standardized testing would be conducted carefully and in keeping with the energy level and feelings of each individual student. They were told, too, that to discover highly gifted students, early testing is often important. Waiting until later grades to test may lower scores due to a lack of an adequate test ceiling to allow students to demon-

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strate their ability. The daylong workshop included characteristics of HUGS, reasons these students' ability might not be evident in their classroom performance or on most of their test scores, and methods for identifying giftedness in students whose ability may be "masked" (Slocumb & Payne, 2000) by their poverty.

The test scores of students referred by these teachers were included in the data collection along with scores of students in other grades referred by teachers who did not attend the workshop. Student referrals tended to come more from schools closer to the county seat than from distant schools; travel to the gifted resource center entails a long bus ride for those students who live "out in the county." The county's newly developed identification policy was disseminated across the district. Accompanying the policy was information about the characteristics of HUGS and encouragement to refer children who showed one or more of the characteristics.

During the period covered by this study, 57 elementary and middle school students were referred by their classroom teachers for evaluation to decide whether they were eligible for individualized educational planning and instruction designed to accommodate giftedness. All referred students were evaluated. Using the new policy to guide their decision making, some students not deemed eligible under the conventional identification protocol were given alternative assessments. Mountain County's new policy, developed in response to the revised state regulation, required the eligibility committee to make a determination of qualification for alternative assessment based on its analysis of the individual student's performance, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic minority status. The county policy provided the following guidelines:

Determination that the assessment methods for eligibility specified in Policy 2419 discriminate against a student will be made by the eligibility committee based on (1) review of classroom performance as evaluated by the child's teachers; (2) review of individual children's assessment results on the WISC-III or S-B IV and an individualized standardized achievement test, such as the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery; and (3) consideration of criteria for belonging to traditionally under-represented groups.

Criteria for classification as belonging to traditionally under-represented groups are as follows:

- Identification as Exceptional in accordance with WV Policy 2419
- Membership in a racial or ethnic minority group
- Economic disadvantage as evidenced by eligibility for free or reduced lunch
- Underachievement (which takes into consideration the student's ability level, educational performance, and achievement level).

To qualify for placement in gifted education, the students being evaluated through alternative assessments had to meet the following criteria if they did not attain a score two or more standard deviations above the mean on the WISC-III or S-B IV:

Student attains Full Scale IQ score of 115 (one standard deviation above the mean) or higher on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children or IQ score of 116 (one standard deviation above the mean) or higher on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (with consideration of 1.0 standard error of measurement at the 68% confidence interval).

*and*

Student attains a standard score on the Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test of 115 or higher (with consideration of 1.0 standard error of measurement at the 68% confidence interval).

*and*

Student attains standard score on the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales of 111 or higher (with consideration of one standard error of measurement at the 68% confidence interval).

The district retained standardized testing in spite of some expert recommendations to eliminate the use of standardized intelligence tests as a means of identifying students in need of special services (e.g., Birch, 1984/2000). Although district decision makers agreed that it is important to adapt assessment procedures to students' needs, they elected to do so through standardized measures to a large extent. Alternative assessments sometimes used to identify HUGS may not

find students with the most extraordinary intellectual strengths (e.g., Dirks & Quarforth, 1981; Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2000). Some alternative assessments are similar to grades in that they often represent irrelevant qualities based on teachers' preferences. The systematic bias associated with standardized testing actually offers an advantage in some cases, in that the nature and, to some extent, the quantity of the bias has been so thoroughly documented (and thus can be taken into account). Under West Virginian policy, classroom performance, as reflected in grades, for example, or academic achievement as measured by standardized tests must be used to help make the eligibility determination as to whether a student is gifted.

## **Data Analysis and Results**

As seems to be true generally (McBee, 2006), the elementary and middle school teachers in the district referred more White students than Black students. During this referral period, teachers referred more girls than boys and more primary grade students than intermediate and middle school students. In contrast to typical referral patterns, in which teachers tend to refer fewer students on free lunch (McBee, 2006), the teachers referred more economically disadvantaged students than nondisadvantaged students. The teachers' workshop and the new policy may have resulted in a greater proportion of HUGS being referred for evaluation than in the past. No comparison could be made, however, because data were not available on the economic status of previous referrals.

Of the 57 students referred, 17 were first graders. The next largest group was second graders ( $n = 10$ ), then third ( $n = 9$ ); fourth and fifth grade referrals were equal ( $n = 6$  each); 5 children were referred from the sixth grade; and 3 children were referred from the seventh grade. That there were more first graders referred than from any other single grade could be coincidental. Teachers from first-grade classrooms in this district usually do not refer their students because they do not want them to leave the school to go to the resource center and because they think standardized testing is inappropriate for children that young. However, it seems likely that the workshop did increase the number of first-grade referrals.

**Table 1**  
**Mean Full Scale (FS) IQ Scores**

Referrals	Number of Referrals	WISC FS IQ Mean	WISC FS IQ Range	WISC FS IQ Standard Deviation
African American Females	5	112	45	15.3
African American Males	4	101	22	8.85
White Females	24	115	30	8.43
White Males	23	116	48	11.35
Total Group	56	114	58	11.43

IQ test performance data from the evaluation were available for 56 of the 57 students. The mean Full Scale (FS) IQ score of these 56 students was 114. The mean Verbal and Performance Scale scores were 117 and 108 respectively. Eleven students qualified for placement in gifted education programs according to the conventional eligibility criteria, and one qualified for placement on the basis of new, alternative testing. In all, 22% of the students qualified for placement. Although this percentage may seem low, it is only slightly lower than the proportion of teacher referrals from the classic study by Pagnato and Birch (1959) using similar criteria. Moreover, teacher nominations for low-income and Black students tend to be less accurate than for students from high- and middle-income families and for White students (McBee, 2006). The teacher referrals in Mountain County during this period were relatively efficient.

As shown in Table 1, girls scored higher on average than boys, and White girls and boys scored higher than African American girls and boys. Thirty girls were referred for testing, compared to 27 boys. Seven girls were determined to be gifted according to conventional eligibility criteria; that is, they scored at least two standard deviations above the mean on a comprehensive, individually administered intelligence test and demonstrated high academic achievement. One girl was determined eligible through alternative testing and high achievement. In all, 8 of the 30 girls (27%) were determined to be eligible for gifted education services. A mean of 112 FS IQ and a median 114 FS

IQ were identified for the 5 African American girls who were tested. The highest score was 131 FS IQ and the lowest was 87. The highest scoring girl was determined to be eligible for the gifted program on the basis of her IQ score, which was at the 98th percentile, and on her academic performance.

Of the 25 White girls referred, one girl's scores were not in her file. Of the 24 for whom scores were available, 5 girls, or 21%, qualified for placement by conventional standards. The median score was 118 FS IQ. The highest score was 131 FS IQ. The lowest score was 99 FS IQ. One girl was placed in the gifted program because of her scores on alternative tests.

Only 9 (16%) of the students referred for testing were African American; however, that is a slightly higher proportion than the proportion of African Americans in the county population (11%). Of the 9 referred, one was declared eligible for placement. African American students as a group were declared eligible less often than Whites as a group.

Of the 27 boys referred for evaluation, 4 (15%) qualified by conventional standards, and none qualified by alternative testing. Among the African American boys, a mean FS IQ of 100.7 and a median of 103 were obtained. The highest score was 109 and the lowest was 87. None of the African American boys were determined to be eligible for placement. Of the 23 White boys, 4 (17%) qualified for placement. The mean score was 116 FS IQ, and the median was 114. The highest score was 145 FS IQ, and the lowest score was 97.

The mean FS IQ score for White girls and boys referred for evaluation was 113; the mean FS IQ for African American girls and boys was 107. The lowest score (87 FS IQ) was earned by two economically disadvantaged African American students, a girl and a boy. Each was living in a home with one parent. The highest score (145 FS IQ) was earned by a White economically disadvantaged male student living with both parents.

Of the 29 economically disadvantaged students referred, 7 qualified for placement by conventional standards. One, a White girl, qualified through alternative testing. The mean FS IQ of the economically disadvantaged students referred was 113. The mean of the nondisadvantaged students referred was only one point higher, 114 FS IQ. As shown in Table 2, the range of IQ scores for the eco-

**Table 2**

**Full Scale (FS) IQ Scores of Economically Disadvantaged and Other Students**

Referrals	Number of Referrals	WISC FS IQ Mean	WISC FS IQ Range	WISC FS IQ Standard Deviation
Economically Disadvantaged	29	113	58	12.5
Nondisadvantaged by Income	28	114	31	8.2

nomically disadvantaged was greater than for students from higher income households.

Of the 33 primary grade students referred, 10 qualified according to conventional criteria and only one qualified according to the alternative criteria. In fact, only 4 students were given the alternative test. According to the new policy, 18 other historically underrepresented students should have been provided alternative testing. At least one of those students' parents refused to continue with the alternative testing protocol.

The authors compared scores of primary versus intermediate grade students to see if there appeared to be any difference. The first-through third-grade students who were economically disadvantaged scored a mean FS IQ of 111. The intermediate and middle school students scored a mean FS IQ of 120. Primary and intermediate/middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged differed in their scores in the same direction and by about the same number of points.

In terms of placement, students who shared more risk factors did about the same as those who shared fewer. The risk factors on which data were collected are as follows: (a) belonging to a minority race, (b) being economically disadvantaged, and (c) being parented by only one parent. Although all of these factors are related, each carries its own specific problems. Our analysis of risk factors, based on risk factors identified by Borland, Schnur, and Wright (2000), found that

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only 1 of the 12 students who qualified for placement had all three risk factors. Only one student found eligible even had two risk factors. Nine of the eligible students had only one risk factor.

Of the 12 students who qualified, only one, a female economically disadvantaged African American student, lived in a one-parent home. This qualifying student was one of the 17 economically disadvantaged students referred for evaluation living in a single-parent household. In this small sample, single-parent status seemed to militate against qualifying. Half of the economically disadvantaged students lived with only one parent, as compared to 25% of the boys and girls who are not economically disadvantaged. Of the entire group of 57 students, 38, or 67%, lived with both parents.

Surprisingly, in this sample, economic disadvantage made it slightly more likely to qualify for eligibility. This result is not due to alternative testing of HUG students—only one of the students who qualified took an alternative test. The students qualified on a comprehensive individually administered intelligence test. Only 4 of the 12 were not economically disadvantaged. Only 14% of those not economically advantaged were determined eligible. This compares to 25% of the economically disadvantaged students who were determined to be eligible according to conventional criteria or 29% deemed eligible based on both conventional and alternative assessment.

## **Discussion**

The primary question of interest in this study was the percentage of HUGS who would be eligible for gifted education services. The analysis found that HUGS were identified to a greater extent than middle class White students in this study. Although the mean scores of low-income and African American students were slightly lower (one point) than the mean score of other students, several of them obtained a percentile of 98 or higher on the WISC-III. This phenomenon suggests that the possibility that problems in identifying HUGS may be solved in part through concerted efforts to improve and increase referrals of these students. In this study, only the first-grade teachers were provided a workshop on how to recognize giftedness in students from minority groups or low-income

homes. However, all teachers were informed of the new policy and of the importance of referring children from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in gifted programs. It is possible that the combination of increased referrals and perhaps a slight improvement in recognition of qualities that indicate giftedness in these students contributed to the result.

A secondary question of interest in this study was who would have qualified under the previous WVDE regulation providing for HUGS who did not qualify under the county's new policy. The alternative measures, the Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT) and the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales (GATES), were provided to seven students from historically underrepresented groups. The UNIT and the GATES are often used to provide alternative or supplementary evaluations for students who may not demonstrate their abilities on verbal intelligence or achievement tests. These alternatives only supported placement of one of these students. In every other case, the UNIT scores were considerably lower than the WISC-III FS scores.

The following students met the "old" criteria in that either their Verbal IQ or Performance IQ was two standard deviations or more above the mean, but their FS IQ scores were not, even with consideration of one standard error of measurement. Woodcock-Johnson (WJ) Tests of Achievement Broad Reading and Broad Math subtest scores are provided if they were available:

- African American female, economically disadvantaged, with Verbal IQ 138 and Performance IQ 108 (FS IQ 124); WJ scores not available.
- White female, economically disadvantaged, with Verbal IQ 117 and Performance IQ 130 (FS IQ 125); UNIT 102; GATES Intellectual 114, Academic 130, Creativity 111, Leadership 118, Artistic 117; WJ Broad Reading 118, 88th percentile; WJ Broad Math 146, 99th percentile.
- White female, economically disadvantaged, with Verbal IQ 132 and Performance IQ 102 (FS IQ 120); UNIT 100; WJ Broad Reading 128, 97th percentile; WJ Broad Math 124, 94th percentile.

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- White male, economically disadvantaged, with Verbal IQ 131 and Performance IQ 94 (FS IQ 112); WJ Broad Reading 118, 88th percentile; WJ Broad Math 137, 99th percentile.
- White male, economically disadvantaged, with Verbal IQ 113 and Performance IQ 132 (FS IQ 124); WJ scores not available.

None of the above students who would have qualified under the old policy qualified according to the new county policy. The high Verbal or Performance scores earned by these students suggest why their teachers referred them, as do their achievement test scores. Four of the five students who earned these scores were from single-parent families.

Two other students who were not HUGS scored this same pattern:

- White male, not economically disadvantaged, with Verbal IQ 138 and Performance IQ 86 (FS IQ 114); WJ scores unavailable.
- White male, not economically disadvantaged, with Verbal IQ 128 and Performance IQ 108 (FS IQ 121); WJ Broad Reading 132, 98th percentile; WJ Broad Math 140, 99th percentile.

The second student was placed in the gifted program, although this placement was not in accord with state or county policy. His scores of 132 on the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement Broad Reading subtest and 140 on the Broad Math subtest no doubt suggested to the eligibility committee that such a placement was advisable. Occasionally students are placed, but not counted for state funds, if they show strong evidence of giftedness but do not meet all criteria. Both of these boys came from two-parent homes.

Only one child out of the 29 economically disadvantaged or racial minority students benefited from the alternative assessment. The child who was placed scored FS IQ of 116 on the WISC and 116 on the UNIT and had lower scores than the FS IQ scores of most of the racial minority and economically disadvantaged students who were excluded from the gifted program under the new policy but who would have been included under the old verbal or performance provision. However, this child scored as well on the WJ Broad Reading (122 or 93rd percentile) and WJ Broad Math (138 or 99th

percentile) as all but one of the children who scored high enough on their FS IQ to qualify.

Considering the achievement test scores and Verbal and Performance scores of the children who would have qualified on the basis of either a Verbal or Performance score on the WISC, it seems likely that their classroom teachers judged correctly in nominating them as children likely to be eligible for gifted education. It is unfortunate that these children were excluded under the county's interpretation of the state's broader statement regarding eligibility of HUGS in gifted programs. All of these students for whom achievement scores are available show evidence of outstanding achievement, especially impressive given their economically disadvantaged status. As Frazier (1991) suggested, students should be served according to their needs. All of these children showed evidence of extraordinary strengths. Alternative testing seems an unnecessary expense for this impoverished rural district—the Verbal or Performance scores these children attained on conventional measures could be considered sufficient evidence for placement in gifted education services for this population of children.

Because of their review of the data from this referral period, the Mountain County school district added more alternatives to their new policy. Although these alternatives make a complex policy even more elaborate, they correct for the exclusions just described. They also seek to provide further alternatives for children who may be even more diverse in their experience, circumstances, or nature than most of the children in this study. In order to qualify for gifted education services, students could meet criteria under the county's interim policy cited previously, or, if approved by the school board, the following proposed criteria:

Student attains a Verbal or Performance IQ of two standard deviations or higher on a comprehensive, individually administered intelligence test (with consideration of 1.0 standard error of measurement at the 68% confidence interval).

*or*

Student attains a standard score of two standard deviations or higher on the Goodenough-Harris Draw-a-Person Test

(with consideration of one standard error of measurement at the 68% confidence interval).

*or*

In the rare cases in which a referred student has economic and/or cultural differences (e.g., English as a Second Language) or disabilities (e.g., visual impairment) so severe as to render any conventional standardized test invalid as a means of assessment for the student, a portfolio approach shall be used to determine eligibility. Such an approach shall include collection of work samples and analysis of work by the classroom teacher, school psychologist, and a specialist who is familiar with the development levels of students from similar cultural or economic circumstances or with similar types and degrees of disability.

Although the use of IQ tests was not the only means of selection, scoring well on IQ tests was a necessity for qualifying for educational services designed for gifted students in the rural school district in which this study was conducted, even though a revision of the WVDE regulations would have allowed the use of other measures. The district chose to maintain the use of the same criteria that were used with other students for two reasons. First, they felt that the combination of intelligence test scores and classroom performance that was in place for all students was a more valid indicator of academic ability than other measures, even though, as Ford (1996) pointed out, most standardized intelligence and achievement tests are less reliable for students from minority groups than for White, middle class students whose performance is well represented in norming groups. West Virginia's definition of giftedness includes only intellectual ability and thus other measures used in states with a broader definition, such as creativity tests, were not considered suitable.

In using standardized tests to identify HUGS, it is important to keep in mind that these tests measure acquisition of concepts and skills valued by the mainstream subculture. They do not measure native ability and are, in effect, simply achievement tests sampling from a broader domain than tests that are labeled achievement tests. Precocious knowledge of the concepts and skills needed to perform well on IQ tests and other achievement tests may come from native

quickness in combination with slim or prodigious experience; or they may come from prodigious experience alone. Unfortunately, precocious knowledge cannot come from native quickness alone. A child who is completely or almost completely excluded from the concepts and skills measured by the test cannot score high on it. We do well when we find children whose native ability and interest in verbal and mathematical domains, when combined with even limited exposure to the concepts, skills, and values measured by IQ and achievement tests, allow them to demonstrate advanced levels of mastery. Other measures must be used to find other children whose native quickness is expressed in different ways.

## **Conclusion**

The results of case studies such as this one are illustrative, not generalizable. The authors hope that this study is useful in documenting how HUGS performed according to eligibility criteria during one year's referral period in one rural school district in West Virginia. The results of data analysis in this case study suggest several avenues of research. For example, more study should be conducted of the effects of increasing and improving teachers' referrals of HUGS. Research is needed to determine whether living in a single-parent home may be more important as a risk factor in a child being excluded from gifted education than has been recognized in the past. Determining whether this factor is more than an indicator of greater poverty, on average, than in a two-parent home is one problem of interest in the effort to provide more equitable representation in gifted programs.

This study also indicates that monitoring identification procedures is important. School psychologists and eligibility committees can accidentally or purposely make decisions that are not in keeping with school policy. Although some placements made in violation of policy may benefit the individual children who are placed, such violations may also privilege children unfairly. Equitable policy applied consistently seems essential to equitable programs. If alternative tests are to be used, they should be used in every instance called for by the policy.

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